

Guidance for European Social Survey National Coordinators on delivering ESS R10 fieldwork during the COVID-19 pandemic

This note includes guidance and requirements for ESS National Coordinators (NCs) to help ensure the safe delivery of Round 10 fieldwork in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As stated in the R10 specification, “Before starting work, all interviewers must be issued with and ensure compliance with guidelines for conducting fieldwork according to national, local, or agency-level COVID-19 regulations”. We have not issued central guidance on which particular measures need to be adopted by interviewers as the regulations and context will differ between countries. However, ESS ERIC does have a responsibility to ensure that ESS R10 can be delivered across participating countries in a way that ensures all respondents can be interviewed safely. We are therefore issuing this note with some further guidance for NCs on fieldwork preparations and delivery¹:

- **You should conduct a risk assessment before starting fieldwork.** This should include a review of your fieldwork procedures against the regulations and guidelines in your country but also consider survey-specific aspects that may not be covered by these regulations/guidelines. ESS HQ will supply a short risk assessment questionnaire by 18 September. Please ensure this is completed and sent to your Country Contact before you start fieldwork.
- **You should ensure compliance with all relevant regulations and guidelines in your country.** This includes government guidelines but also any standards/regulations set by your fieldwork agency and any professional bodies overseeing the delivery of research in your country.
- **You should ensure that fieldwork meets the highest possible standards** (rather than minimum standards) in relation to any regulations or guidelines in your country. This means **adopting recommended measures** as well as compulsory ones. For example, if wearing of face coverings is recommended but not compulsory in your country, this should be done².
- **To reduce the risk of spreading infection, re-use of showcards should be minimised. The same set of showcards should not be re-used within a 48-hour period** (i.e. there must be a minimum 48-hour window between when one respondent touches the showcards and another respondent touches the showcards). Interviewers should therefore be provided with several sets of showcards prior to starting fieldwork. **Please avoid laminating showcards as studies have found that the virus lasts longer on plastic compared with card**³. Asking respondents to look at the screen must also be avoided as social distancing would likely be compromised. Other documents that might be given to respondents (e.g. information leaflets, conditional incentives) should also be unique for every respondent and not ‘reused’ under any circumstances.

¹ In case the guidance here differs from official national guidance the latter should prevail.

² This US study showed that people were more likely to say they would respond to the census if the census taker was wearing a face mask when they came to their door: <https://www.surveypractice.org/article/14156-interviewer-face-coverings-and-response-to-personal-visit-surveys-a-case-study-of-the-2020-u-s-census>

³ <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2004973>

- **You should ensure that interviewers adhere to social distancing guidelines in your country.** In most countries, this will mean keeping a gap of at least 1-2 metres between the interviewer and the respondent. Where possible, conduct the interview in a well-ventilated area with windows open (if inside). If this is not possible in the respondent's home, it should be considered whether an interview can be conducted in a different setting (e.g. in a private garden). Please also try to ensure that household members apart from the respondent do not enter the room / area where the interview is being conducted.
- Interviewers should be briefed to **wash or sanitise their hands before and after every interview.**
- **All interviewers should be fully briefed on these requirements** and any other relevant points in your country as part of the briefings before fieldwork begins.

If you have any questions about these requirements or require any further information or advice, please speak to your Country Contact.